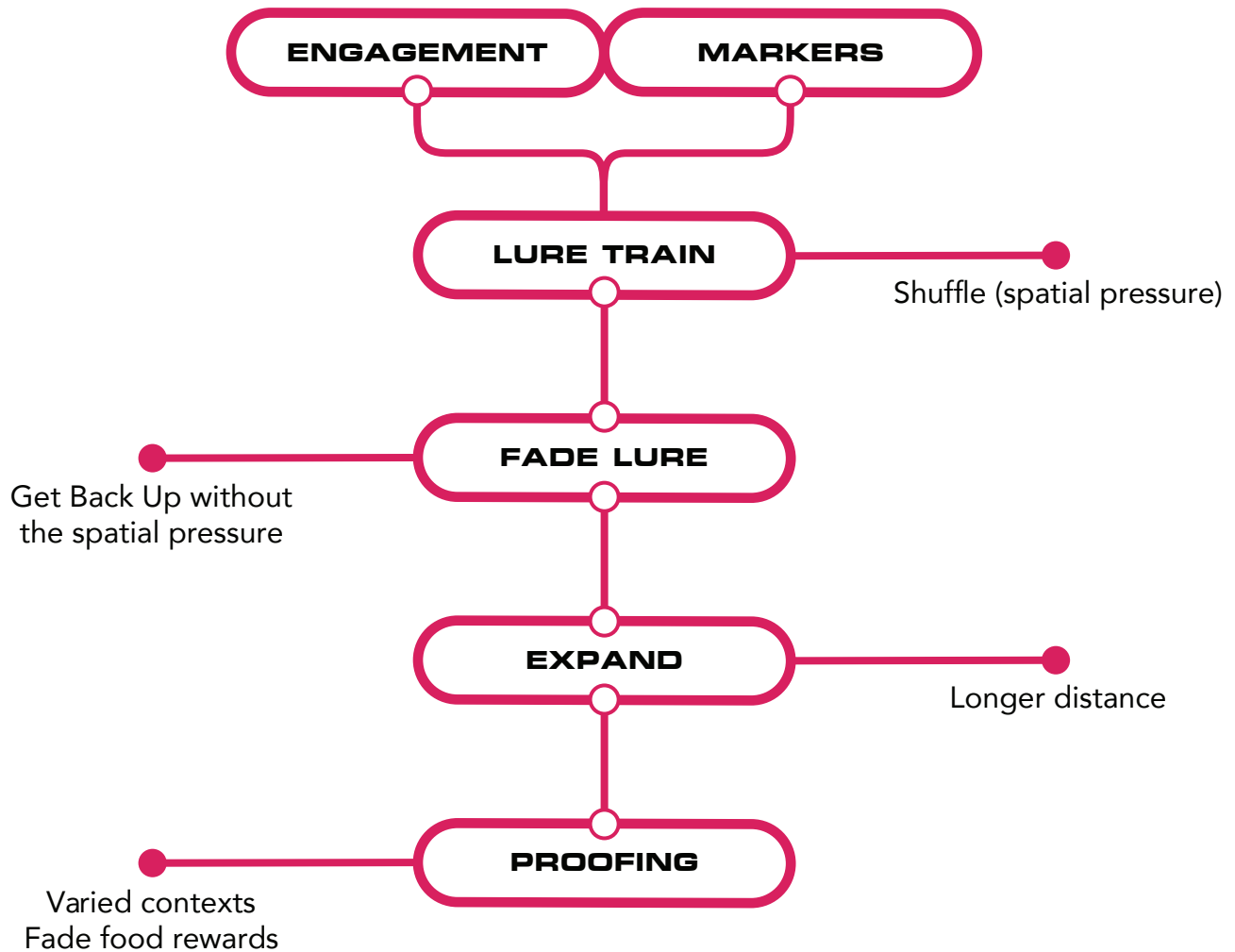


BACK UP



Backing up on cue is a valuable household management tool for any pet dog to know. It's pretty easy to teach, too.

The basic steps are the same as for all Lure-Reward Training:

1. **Request:** say "Back Up."
2. **Lure:** Shuffle into your dog and move your hand in the signal (see below).
3. **Response:** your dog steps or hops back to create space.
4. **Reward:** say "YES!" and move into reward.

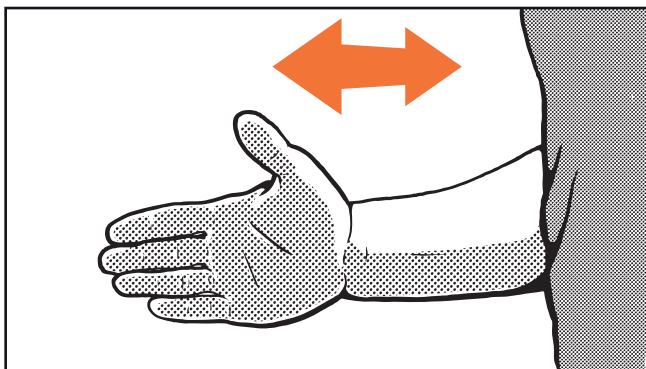
Let's break this down a bit.

Request: You'll say "Back Up" a split second before you move. This is crucial so that your dog learns that the words are meaningful. If you do it simultaneously with your movement, they'll ignore the words and only pay attention to what you do.

Lure: Lures are just things we use to induce a behavior since your dog won't know what the words or signals mean. In this case, shuffle forward until you crowd your dog's space a bit. Shuffling prevents you from stepping on their toes. This minor spatial pressure will cause them to move back.

The hand signal I use is the ASL sign for "Walk Back." It's a flat hand pointing away and moving back and forth. A "Shoo!" motion works, too.

Response: Your dog will step or hop backward to create a little space. Only one step is necessary for the beginning.



Reward: At the exact moment your dog moves back, mark it with "Yes!" And move into reward. As usual, make it fun and dynamic. Food rewards work great, but if you follow our work, you can use your Modular Rewards here. Check out our video post on Modular Reward Events to learn how to make it super impactful: <https://www.simpawtico-training.com/motivate-a-dog-modular-reward-events/>

You can do this in a hallway if your dog sidesteps or goes crooked. Alternatively, you can create a "practice alley" with some chairs or creative use of the furniture.

Some dogs may jump on you when you shuffle. This is natural, and it means they're still a little confused as to what the goal is. Don't worry about this; don't get too worked up over it. The criterion right now is moving backward; focus on that. Deal with jumping elsewhere. Right now, this is a Back-Up session! Once your dog figures out what to do, the jumping usually works itself out.

Start with only one step back, initially. When this looks pretty good, go for two steps and then three. Continue working until you can get about six feet total.

FADE THE LURE

As with all Lure-Reward Training, you have to fade that lure. Say "Back Up" and make your signal, but don't shuffle. If your dog backs up on their own, give HUGE PRAISE AND REWARD.

If they just look at you, they're still confused. So use your shuffle to induce the behavior, but only use the shuffle for follow-up if the verbal command and hand signal go unheeded.

With practice, you should be able to get your dog to back up without having to shuffle. NOW this is ready for practical use.

Even though you will eventually not need food rewards, always praise your dog for doing what you ask. Good feedback is a cheap, low-cal reward you always have with you!

EXPAND

There's no limit to how far you can get your dog to back up on the prompt. With some additional practice, you ought to be able to get your dog to back up six feet if you want, or even ten. There's probably not much reason to go farther than that in practical use.

You can reintroduce some of your training points as you expand. For example, bring back the shuffle to some extent to prompt the extra distance. Remember to signal first, using the shuffle only for a follow-up to get a little more distance before marking and rewarding. Also, set segmented goals for longer back-ups and stretch the distance slowly. For example, most dogs naturally back up about 2 to 3 feet. You won't be able to go from 2 feet to 6 feet right away; a couple of intermediary steps in between are necessary.

In one of my live shows in early 2020, I did a "Back Up Challenge" with my viewers. I gave them a week to see how far they could get their dog to back up. Some of my viewers sent videos of their dogs backing up 15 and 20 feet with no shuffle or movement besides the hand signal. Great stuff!!

PROOFING

All fun aside, Back-Up is a management tool, so you'll need it when carrying packages or groceries, when your dog crowds the door, and when they're over-excited. These contexts make things more challenging for your dog until their skill develops.

Make sure to reinforce constructive responses from your dog consistently. Use your shuffle as a follow-up for non-compliance. And take notes of where mistakes are so you can focus training time on those areas. Remember: mistakes are an opportunity to try again!

